

in the end to come down to hard unemotional brass tacks. What economic yield would be obtained from the immense capital expenditure required for such a scheme? How would the enormous day-to-day expenses be met? The report is quite silent on this subject, and in the wicked and imperfect world in which we have to operate, this is a notable and rather damning omission.

WILL PICKLES OF WENSLEYDALE

WILLIAM NORMAN PICKLES was born at Leeds in 1885. He died in 1969 much loved and full of honours. The main achievements of his long life are well known. He was able to show in his country practice how an epidemiological study could be used to map out the natural history of many of those infectious diseases which are seldom admitted to hospital. His descriptions of infectious hepatitis and Bornholm disease are classics. He was the first president of the College of General Practitioners and the first family doctor practising in partnership to be made a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. These are things that happen to no ordinary man. In a full-length biography Professor John Pemberton* has now told the story of this remarkable country doctor in a manner worthy of his subject. What emerges is a portrait of a general practitioner of the old school, loved and implicitly obeyed by his patients, and respected by his colleagues. "What sort of man emerges?" asks Professor Pemberton, and he answers, "I think that the overwhelming impression that Will Pickles made upon his friends was one of warmth of character and friendly geniality. His welcoming words to patient or friend alike and uttered with a beaming smile, 'Now old man, come in', made the visitor feel that Will was truly pleased to see him". Professor Pemberton has succeeded in conveying just this in his biography, but he has done more; he has written an enthralling history of medical practice over the last 60 years.

William Pickles was the son of an urban practitioner. His father who, until he acquired a bicycle, always wore a frock coat and top hat, was earning £800 a year when Will was born and his practice was typical of the time; private practice for very small fees and numerous clubs would have been its backbone. When he had served his house appointments Will did many locums whilst waiting for a suitable practice to turn up. In this way he learned much about the ways of doctors and patients, of the clubs and the parish, and the compounding and dispensing of medicines, so that when he came to settle in Aysgarth he was as well equipped as any of his contemporaries. What was unusual at the time was that he remained the perpetual student and during most of his working life he went for an annual refresher course. Great discoveries come only to those who have the prepared mind and this Will Pickles certainly had. Soon after he settled in practice he saw the inception of the National Health Insurance Act and the panel system. He witnessed the unfortunate wave of hysteria which beset the British Medical Association at that time. He served in the Royal Navy in the 1914 war and in the second he did valuable work on many war-time committees. When the National Health Service was inaugurated it met with his approval. He witnessed the wonderful progress of the science of medicine and the dramatic changes in the modes of practice. Whether he would have approved entirely of large group practices and health centres is doubtful. He was essentially a patriarch and could not happily exist without his flock. This great and simple man is indeed fortunate in his biographer.

* *Will Pickles of Wensleydale. The life of a country doctor.* JOHN PEMBERTON. London. Geoffrey Bles. 1970. Pp. 214. Price £2.10.